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2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, Inc.

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www.211tampabay.org

December 10, 2018

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 18-336 and CC Docket No. 92-105 regarding the
National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act of 2018.

Dear Secretary Dortch,

On behalf of our 211 Tampa Bay Cares, Inc. (211TBC) Board of Directors and leadership team, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the current effort undertaken by the Federal Communications Commission to study the feasibility of designating a three-digit number to the National Suicide Hotline and to assess the effectiveness of the current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. In Pinellas and Hernando Counties, 211 is fighting for the health, education, and financial stability of our community members. 211's life-saving mission provides crisis intervention, including emergency counseling and suicide prevention, substance abuse assistance, and shelter resources from for victims fleeing violent domestic situations.

211 has a 46 year history of responding to the needs of the underserved and today partners with County Commissioners, City Council Members, the Juvenile Welfare Board, and 2 United Ways to drive systemic changes to solve our community's toughest problems. Our local 211, like many across the nation, provide blended services, responding to requests for information and referral ***as well as offering crisis counseling and suicide prevention.***

As a current National Suicide Prevention Lifeline partner, we recognize that suicide prevention is a collaborative effort. Approximately 40% of calls to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline include requests for other social services including substance use, housing, transportation, insurance availability, and prescription assistance. These important wrap-around services and supports are currently services we provide at 211 TBC every day along with our other 211 Network Partners. In 2017, the 211 Network across the US made over 14.8 million connections to help including over 4.4 million connections to housing or utilities assistance, over 2 million connections to physical or mental health services, and over 1.6 million connections to food assistance.

We encourage the FCC to consider our 211 work here in Pinellas and Hernando Counties as a vital partner in increasing access to suicide prevention and intervention services. Since the FCC designation of 211 in 2000, Community Partners from Pinellas and Hernando Counties have invested millions of dollars to ensure the success of 211 Tampa Bay Cares,

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we respond to close to 160,000 requests for help each year- ***thousands of which are from individuals struggling with suicidal thoughts.***

Another three-digit code may erode the simplicity of a single point of access for community help. Despite concerted efforts to educate and market the distinctions, a person in crisis will likely always reach for the most familiar or most accessible number. Our 211 receives calls that are better suited for 911, and our 911 partners often receive calls that we can best answer. We recommend that resources should be invested to improve a unified single point of access with a blended partnership of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and nationwide 211 services. We believe in the power of partnership to address gaps, not duplicate services, and will be a valuable partner in the fight against suicide.

You can learn more about our work at www.211tampabay.org, and can reach my office for additional questions or discussion at 727-403-4062. Thank you for your time in addressing this important issue and for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Micki Thompson
President/CEO